

FAQs

What is the purpose of a SAMP?

The Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District is conducting a comprehensive aquatic resource plan to achieve a balance between aquatic resource protection and reasonable economic development. SAMPs are designed to be conducted in geographic areas of special sensitivity under intense development pressure. Interagency, public, and stakeholder involvement is an essential part of the SAMP.

Where is the Corps developing these SAMPs?

SAMPs are currently being conducted in San Diego Creek, San Juan Creek, and portions of San Mateo Creek Watersheds in Orange County; San Jacinto and upper portions of Santa Margarita Watersheds in Riverside County, and Otay River watershed in San Diego County.

What will be the end result of the process?

There are two main goals of the SAMP process: to establish a watershed-wide aquatic resource reserve program, and to minimize individual and cumulative impacts of future projects in these watersheds. At the end of the SAMP process, there will be areas that will be protected and preserved, as well as areas where future activities would be allowed to occur, provided they meet specific criteria developed for protection of the watersheds. To this end, an anticipated end result is programmatic individual and general permits.

What is the effect of the SAMP on growth/environmental protection in the study areas?

The SAMP process is expected to provide better scientific information to improve the decision making process, allow for a comprehensive approach for the management of aquatic resources, provide predictability to the local citizens, and reflect the needs of the communities situated within these watersheds. The SAMP is not a “super permit” and will not accelerate development in the watersheds.

What is the benefit of SAMPs?

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Corps of Engineers regulates discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the United States. SAMPs are more environmentally sensitive than the traditional project-by project process; the traditional approach may lead to the cumulative loss of resources over time. The SAMP approach allows the Corps to take into account indirect and cumulative effects on aquatic resources in a way not possible in the project-by-project process. With the SAMP approach, we can analyze potential impacts at the watershed scale in order to identify priority areas for preservation, identify potential restoration areas, and determine the least environmentally damaging locations for proposed projects.

What is the first step in developing a SAMP?

Phase I of the SAMP includes the completion of studies to identify the aquatic resources in the project area and to characterize their condition. Other technical studies that aid in understanding aquatic resources in the watersheds will also be conducted.

What happens after the technical studies are completed?

The next phase of the SAMP will consist of compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of our compliance with NEPA an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for each SAMP. Phase II of the process will include the preparation of the Draft EIS and analysis of project alternatives.

Phase III will entail the establishment of an aquatic resource reserve program, as well as Programmatic level permits under Section 404 of the CWA. Future projects may be authorized with the Programmatic level permits if they meet specific criteria designed to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources.

Who is responsible for the SAMP?

The Corps of Engineers is the lead Federal agency for the SAMP.

Are other agencies involved?

Other participating agencies include the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). The CDFG is undertaking a Master Streambed Alteration Agreement to fulfill the requirements of Sections 1600 of the state Fish and Game Code.